

HB341 Fact Sheet

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HB 341

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Background:

HB540 was passed during the 2003 legislative session and provided that "trial jurors be selected from a combined list of qualified electors, licensed drivers and holders of Montana identification cards..." In 2005 the effective date of HB540 was extended from October 1, 2005 to October 1, 2007 (HB598-2005). This change was made at the request of a number of groups including associations representing Montana District Court Clerks and Montana Clerk and Recorders, the Department of Justice, and the Secretary of State's Office. (HB598-2005). This delay was necessary in light of a number of new information technology systems that were being designed at the time, specifically, the Secretary of State's "Montana Votes" system and the Department of Justice's "MERLIN" system.

In December 2005 a task force was formed to identify the system and process changes needed to successfully create the combined juror list. Members of the task force included Clerks of the District Courts, Clerk and Recorders, and staff from the Department of Justice, Secretary of State's Office and the Office of the Court Administrator. HB341 represents the recommendations of the task force.

What does HB 341 do?

- Provides for the more efficient creation and distribution of the combined juror lists envisioned in HB540 (2003) by permitting the Secretary of State's office to produce the combined list of electors, drivers and holders of identification cards and provide the list directly to the Clerk of the District Court.

Note: The Secretary of State's Office maintains the centralized database of registered electors in the State of Montana. This was not the case in 2003 when each county had its own system for registered electors.

- Clarifies that the public juror list posted for review by each Clerk of the District Court include only the name, address and birth year of the qualified juror.
- Makes minor changes in when the Department of Justice must provide the list of licensed drivers and holders of Montana identification cards to the Secretary of State's Office (April instead of May).
- Provides for changes in current statutes (not related to HB 540) to reflect the current practices of producing and preparing jury lists. The current practices are in place as a result of the implementation of Montana Votes.